



Assessment Overview: Teachers should aim to assess students in the most naturalistic environment first (i.e., observation) before moving on to more intentionally structured activities.

What Teachers Need to Know and Observe:

- Children express and manage a range of emotions in their daily lives. For the purpose of the observation, there is no right or wrong emotion that children can express.
- Emotions are internal experiences that are not necessarily observable. It is the expression of an emotion through words, gestures, and/or behaviors that helps an observer understand the emotion or emotions that a child may be experiencing. In places where “behavior” is mentioned, it is inferred that emotion is the underpinning of the behavior.
- Emotion regulation strategies will differ from child to child, but in order to be placed higher on the progression, a child must either be observed or the teacher must be able to infer that a child is regulating emotions across different settings. Teachers should aim to uncover which strategies children are using to be confident in their placement on the progression, though some children might not be able to articulate which strategy they have used.

Key Terms:

- **Strategies** for regulating emotions refer to the ways in which children learn to manage their own emotions. Strategies might involve behavioral, cognitive, and/or physical actions. Examples of strategies include:
 - Thinking about the event in a new way (e.g., “I was really nervous about the spelling bee, but I knew I’d be mad at myself if I didn’t try, so I did it anyway.”).
 - Distraction from the emotion-eliciting event (e.g., Children are taking turns being the “teacher” at their science station. One child begins to look upset when another child becomes bossy. Before she gets any more upset, she gets up and finds another station to go to. When asked why she left, the girl tells the teacher, “I don’t want to play it her way anymore.”)
 - Problem-solving around a difficult situation (e.g., Children are arguing heatedly over playground equipment. One child suggests they ask the teacher to set a timer so they can all take turns).
 - Using physical actions to modulate emotional arousal (e.g. Child wraps her arms around herself and squeezes tight as she appears to be getting excited about an upcoming favorite activity, explaining, “I’m hugging myself so I don’t get too excited about getting to play the word matching game.”).

Note that not every type of strategy is appropriate across settings. For example, avoiding a difficult math problem during a test might only delay additional frustration when made to complete the problem later in the hour. In a more drastic situation, continuously re-thinking bullying situations rather than asking a teacher for help will likely not resolve the situation and could potentially lead to incorrect thought patterns about his or her role in the bullying situation. Ultimately, teachers will need to ensure that the strategies they teach and reinforce are appropriate for their children and for the situation.



General Teacher Instructions:

Support for using strategies are built into the skills in the Emotion Regulation Strategies construct progression. The ability of children to use strategies successfully is connected to their buy-in of the strategy.

Children may be more inclined to regulate their emotions when an adult is present. If observers are finding it difficult to observe use of emotion regulation strategies, they may want to try making themselves more of a silent observer rather than intervening in a potentially emotionally arousing activity.

Children who need continual support to regulate their emotions can often communicate about emotion regulation strategies, even though they cannot always effectively enact them, which is why it is important that teachers be able to observe the need for support prior to actually lending the support. However, teachers should always intervene when there is a potential for a child to harm another child or children. For example, if a teacher knows from experience that a given child will hit when aggravated, the teacher should not wait to confirm that the child needs support in regulating before intervening.

Hard-to-Assess Children

In contrast, some children will not appear to be regulating their emotions even if it is expected that they would need regulate their emotions (i.e., they keep an “even keel” throughout the entire day), and therefore may be more difficult to place on the progression. There could be a number of reasons why these children are more difficult to assess, including (but not limited to):

- The child has mastered his/her regulatory skills and is likely using internal strategies for regulating emotions (for example, cognitive strategies). This may also include *preventive* types of strategies (i.e., prevents emotions from reaching intense levels).
- The child does not need to put forth as much effort to regulate emotions and/or does not experience high levels of emotional arousal in response to situations that otherwise typically elicit emotional responses from most children, possibly because of his or her emotional predisposition (i.e., temperament).
- The child is using predominantly avoidant kinds of strategies, which may also reduce the need for more effortful emotion regulation. Note that this type of strategy may not be acceptable for all situations and as he or she matures.

Discovering what strategy or strategies a child has used to regulate emotions will help a teacher be more confident in the child’s placement on the progression. However, children might not always be able to communicate about the strategies they use. If you are able to surmise that a child has regulated his or her emotions, you can reasonably infer that some kind of strategy has been used and can place a child at Skill C (Sometimes uses learned strategies independently to regulate the expression of emotions during routine activities), Skill D (Consistently uses learned strategies independently to regulate the expression of emotions during routine activities) or Skill E (Independently uses learned strategies for regulating emotions during complex contextual transitions to accomplish a different or new type of task, because of interruptions, or because of changes in the daily routines).

- A good opportunity to probe an “even keeled” child’s strategy use would be after an emotion-eliciting event during which many or most children would reasonably need to regulate emotions, or after which many or most of the child’s peers were observed to be regulating/needing support for regulating their emotions.



- If it appears that the child is largely avoiding emotion-eliciting events throughout his or her day, including events that might be positive, the child would be placed at Skill C (Sometimes uses learned strategies independently to regulate expression of emotions during routine activities.).

For example: Several of your students jump out of their seat and cheer when they learn that they are going on a field trip to the zoo. You notice a child, Lexi, is smiling widely but not shouting or out of her seat. You have observed, on another occasion, that she graciously lost a counting game three times in a row without much disappointment. You say in a voice above the crowd, “I really like how Lexi is staying in her seat and not calling out.” As the class calms down, you say, “Lexi, tell your friends what they should do when they get *really, really* good news and they are so excited they feel like they could just burst!” Lexi’s answer may give you information on how she was able to stay regulated when the other children were not (e.g., Lexi says, “You can just squeeze your toes really tight so you don’t jump up and then think about how you can talk about it at lunch.”). This child would be placed at Skill E.

Observation Instructions:

Potential Opportunities for Observation	Potential Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Any school setting (e.g., classroom, playground, cafeteria, hallways). ➤ At any point during an event or activity (e.g., initiation of an interaction, during the course of an activity, transitioning between activities, or termination of an activity). ➤ Any type of activity, particularly activities that might elicit an emotional response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ competitive scenarios (e.g., games) ○ interruptions (e.g., emergency drills) ○ children working in proximity to one another ○ collaborative work ○ social interactions ○ accidents (e.g., spilling a drink) ○ new or unusual events, activities, materials, or tasks (e.g., early dismissal) ➤ Any group size: (whole class, small group, pairs, or individual). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There are no specific materials required when observing for this construct.

Placing a Child on this Progression: With all progressions, the goal is to identify the level at which the child is solidly performing. If the child is inconsistent at a given level, as children often are when they are learning a new skill, the correct placement is at a lower level. The teacher needs to collect enough evidence to be confident that the child is correctly placed on the progression. This will include multiple pieces of evidence where the child demonstrates the skill level at which he/she is placed and at least one documented instance of allowing the child the opportunity to demonstrate his/her skills/behavior at the next highest level. It will be difficult to place some children on a progression. Children who are not yet at Skill A should be marked as “Emerging” for that progression. Children who have reached the highest level of a progression should be marked at that highest level.



Observation Prompts

There are no global observation prompts for this assessment mean; any prompts are at the skill level and are listed in the Examples table.

NOTES: There are no Situations or Tasks for Emotion Regulation Strategies.



Emotion Regulation Strategies: Instructions (by Skill-Level) & Examples

Skill	Skill Progression	Skill-Level Teacher Instructions	Examples
A	When offered strategies for regulating the expression of emotions, begins to use the strategies offered with continual support .	<p>At least one strategy needs to be offered to the child. Avoid offering multiple strategies aligned to a specific behavior at one time when working with an individual child</p> <p>The connection of a strategy to an emotion/context must be made explicit to the student (if they are expected to use the strategy effectively) (e.g., I see you are upset, remember that one strategy that you can use to help yourself feel better/relax is to take a deep breath and count to 5).</p> <p>Continual support means that the teacher needs to provide reminders often during the same activity as well as across activities throughout the day.</p>	<p><i>Ms. Walker has set up a reward system chart on the wall to help students in the classroom adhere to the classroom expectations (e.g., listening and being respectful while others are talking). During a lesson, Damion becomes excited and interrupts Ms. Walker. She points to the wall several times to remind him of the reward system chart, and he makes an effort to contain his excitement, but needs multiple reminders to do so.</i></p> <p><i>For several days during book-share time, Ellen has been shouting comments rather than waiting to be called on. The teacher offers her a strategy (sit on hand) to moderate her impulsive shout-outs, but Ellen has not been successful in implementing. The teacher determines that Ellen may need more concrete support, so decides to role play the situation with Ellen. The teacher recreates the book-share scenario and takes the role of a student who calls out (e.g., make it fun – name her Sally Shout-out). Ellen’s role is to redirect Sally to use the suggested strategy (sit on hand), resulting in the teacher’s successful use of that strategy as a model for Ellen. The teacher may follow up by asking Ellen what she observed (strategy use). For subsequent instances, Ellen needs a specific reminder (remember Sally Shout-out) of role play to continue to demonstrate the desired behavior.</i></p>
B	When offered strategies for regulating the expression of emotions, consistently uses the strategies offered with minimal support .	<p>At least one strategy needs to be offered to the child. Avoid offering multiple strategies aligned to a specific behavior at one time when working with an individual child.</p> <p>The connection of a strategy to an emotion/context must be made explicit to the student (if they are expected to use the strategy effectively) (e.g., I see you are upset, remember that one strategy that you</p>	<p><i>Mrs. B understands that as her students engage in less structured classroom activities they may need some guidelines for acceptable behaviors. During circle group, she and her students develop a list of pro-social behaviors to be displayed. When it’s Andy’s turn to work at the computer station, he expresses his joy by jumping up and down and yelling “Yaaa”. Mrs. B points to the chart while reminding Andy of the agreement to “use inside voices” during instructional times. Andy immediately checks his behavior and moves quietly to the computer area.</i></p> <p><i>Before introducing an activity, Mr. Lim reviews the non-verbal cues to remain calm and quiet (e.g., tapping the chest to signal a breathing</i></p>



Skill	Skill Progression	Skill-Level Teacher Instructions	Examples
		<p>can use to help yourself feel better is to take a deep breath and count to 5).</p> <p>Children are “consistently” using strategies for regulating emotions with support when <i>constant</i> support is no longer needed. One or two reminders across multiple activities would not be considered constant.</p>	<p><i>technique) used in the classroom while students are working in a small group. During the activity, Aubrey becomes visibly frustrated while waiting her turn. Mr. Lim provides a non-verbal cue (e.g., taps his own chest) to remind her to use a pre-taught strategy (breathing) to reduce frustration. Aubrey responds to the reminder by using the strategy and remaining calm.</i></p>
C	Sometimes uses learned strategies independently to regulate the expression of emotions during routine activities.	<p>Examples of routine activities include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily instructional activities (e.g., center time, large and small group instruction, or "circle time"). • Daily routine Transition activities (e.g., entering the classroom at the beginning of the day, lining up at the door, or between instructional activities). • Regularly scheduled activities (e.g., "specials" such as PE, Music, Art, Library, or Computer Lab). 	<p><i>When about to yell out the answer to a question that Ms. Knight poses during a whole class lesson, Jorge checks himself and quietly says to himself, "Stop, think, and then raise your hand," before raising his hand to answer the question instead of yelling out his answer.</i></p> <p><i>While Mrs. Yen is working with a small group for reading, Amy has a question about the task she needs to complete during her center work. Amy starts toward Mrs. Yen's reading group, but this time remembers the strategy Mrs. Yen taught the class: "Ask 3, then ask me". Amy decides to ask her teammate at the center rather than interrupt Mrs. Yen's instruction. She gets the information she needs to continue her work.</i></p>
D	Consistently uses learned strategies independently to regulate the expression of emotions during routine activities.	See Skill C.	<p><i>Reese worked with her teacher on a strategy to check in with her emotional state (e.g., comparing how she's feeling to a car engine revving softly versus revving loudly) and when to respond to that emotional state with the related strategy (e.g., going to sit in the reading area when the "engine is revving loudly"). The teacher observes Reese going to the reading area after recess; when asked, she responds that she went to the reading area to "calm my engine".</i></p> <p><i>Slater has been practicing a strategy during science inquiry group activities to capture his thoughts by doodling instead of blurting out while someone else is talking or taking a turn. The teacher observes Slater using a journal to draw pictures and jot down "notes" while his group members are taking their turns doing the experiment. Slater is now able to regularly</i></p>



Skill	Skill Progression	Skill-Level Teacher Instructions	Examples
			<i>use this strategy during group activities to help him wait patiently and communicate positively with his group members.</i>
E	Independently uses learned strategies for regulating emotions during complex contextual transitions (e.g., exposed to multiple stimuli simultaneously), to accomplish a different or new type of task, because of interruptions, or because of changes in the daily routines.	<p>Examples of complex contextual transitions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions from less structured to more structured activities • Transitions from a favorite or highly engaging activity to one that is less favored • Transitions outside of the Classroom (transitions outside of the classroom may be more complex due to the student perception that behavioral expectations outside of the classroom are different) 	<p><i>When a Mark's mother is coming in later for a classroom event (e.g. a "Parents and Careers" day), he begins to get excited in anticipation, but quickly remembers to use a strategy to calm down (e.g., sitting on his hands) and focuses on the task at hand.</i></p> <p><i>Janae is in the computer lab when the fire alarm sounds. She is in the middle of an activity and feels frustrated because she wants to finish. Her classmates start going out the door but Janae stays in her seat. Janae remembers that when she's frustrated, taking a deep breath can help her to be less frustrated. She takes a deep breath (observed by the teacher) and then asks her teacher, "Will we come back so I can finish?"</i></p> <p><i>Mrs. Trucci, informs her students that they will not be having Technology class today because there is a school-wide assembly instead. Mrs. Trucci watches the students who she knows enjoy the Technology class to see their reaction. Gavin sighs, and looks disappointed, but within minutes is back to his usual self again. He says, "I need to cooperate," as he turns around towards the door and joins his classmates in line.</i></p>